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SUBJECT: ICELAND: ACQUITTAL IN FIRST TIP COURT CASE

¶1. (U) In October, prosecutors indicted Catalina Ncogo, an Icelandic citizen of Equatorial Guinean origin, on charges of human trafficking, profiting from prostitution as a third party, and drug smuggling. The trafficking indictment was the first charge of such a nature in Iceland. On December 1 the Reykjanes District Court acquitted Ncogo of the human trafficking charge, but convicted her on the charges of profiting from prostitution and drug smuggling.

¶2. (U) Ncogo was accused of deceiving another woman, a compatriot from Equatorial Guinea, into coming to Iceland for a vacation and then holding her captive for a number of months. The woman was allegedly coerced into prostitution and threatened with physical violence and even death if she protested. The district court ruled against the trafficking indictment citing insufficient evidence to prove that Ncogo had threatened the woman and kept her enslaved. There are plans, currently on the legislative docket, to amend the existing TIP legislation to lower the burden of proof needed to obtain a trafficking conviction. Post's contacts said that if these amendments were in place already, Ncogo probably would have been convicted on the TIP charges.

¶3. (U) The court did convict Ncogo of profiting from prostitution and drug smuggling. The court stated it was clear that Ncogo's prostitution operation had been extensive and that she had profited from pimping out not only the woman from Equatorial Guinea but several "other anonymous women" as well. Ncogo's lawyer said that he intends to appeal this decision and take the matter before the Icelandic Supreme Court. The District Court also convicted an accomplice of Ncogo, an Icelandic man, who assisted her in her operations by, for example, taking photographs of the prostitutes for an advertisement website.

¶4. (U) Sigdrudur Gudmundsdottir, Director of the women's counseling center Stigamot, told Emboff that she was pleased an indictment on trafficking had taken place. She was also pleased that a conviction had occurred, even if it was not on the charge of human trafficking. Gudmundsdottir commented that Iceland has made considerable progress in its anti-trafficking efforts recently, notably the adoption in March of an Icelandic national action plan against trafficking in human beings.

WATSON